U.S. Army Wartime Acquisition and Procurement

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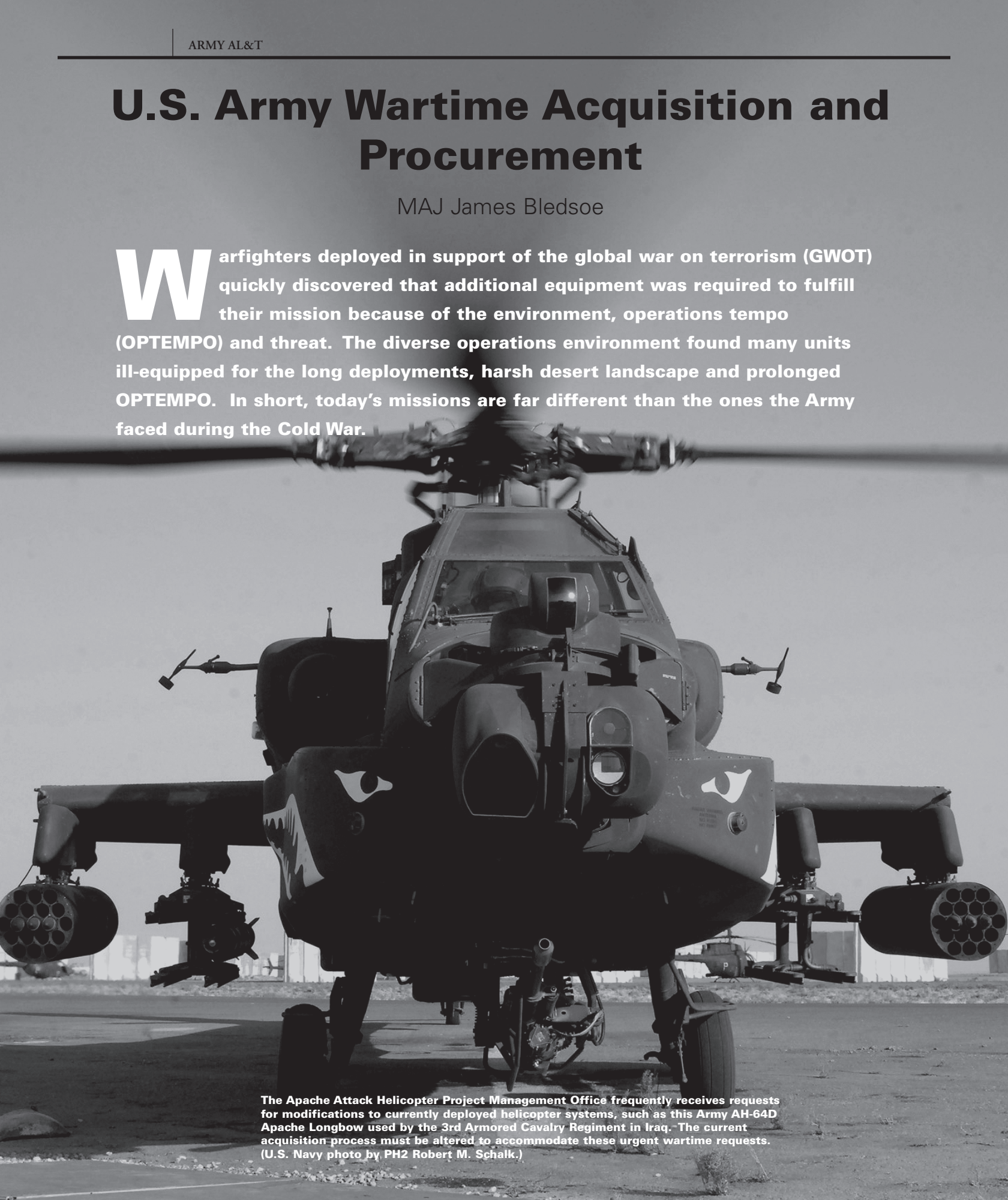
Warfighters deployed in support of the global war on terrorism (GWOT) quickly discovered that additional equipment was required to fulfill their mission because of the environment, operations tempo (OPTEMPO) and threat. The diverse operations environment found many units ill-equipped for the long deployments, harsh desert landscape and prolonged OPTEMPO. In short, today's missions are far different than the ones the Army faced during the Cold War.



The Apache Attack Helicopter Project Management Office frequently receives requests for modifications to currently deployed helicopter systems, such as this Army AH-64D Apache Longbow used by the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment in Iraq. The current acquisition process must be altered to accommodate these urgent wartime requests. (U.S. Navy photo by PH2 Robert M. Schalk.)

To counter these emerging threats, the military is rapidly transforming into a lighter, leaner and more lethal and sustainable force. Today's combat environment is all encompassing, from fighting urban insurgents with superb technology to cave-dwelling nomads who prosecute the war with a frightening single-mindedness and tenacity. As a result, U.S. forces have had to continually change tactics, techniques and procedures (TTPs).

The austere, extremely harsh environmental conditions, coupled with using equipment at rates 5-10 times the normal peacetime rates have placed much greater demands on all facets of the Army's logistics and sustainment capabilities and support structure. Accordingly, the acquisition of materiel solutions, supplies and services to support frontline equipment halfway around the world has been extremely challenging and resulted in the procurement of commercial-off-the-shelf (COTS) items. These evolving field requirements must be swiftly and effectively managed to properly outfit warfighters to ensure their battlefield survivability. This article briefly discusses some current procurement methods the Army is using to provide products and services to our combatant commanders and Soldiers waging the GWOT.

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The Apache Attack Helicopter Project Management Office receives requests daily for modifications or additions to currently deployed helicopter systems and subsystems. User requirements are funneled from the requesting unit through the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) to HQDA and DOD. HQDA and DOD — and in some cases Congress — work the approval process and funding piece and then issue directives to the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Acquisition, Logistics and Technology for execution. The product managers (PMs) then execute the programs under their charter. In the past, DA had to carefully manage numerous budgets supporting multiple operations and maintenance programs. As a result, procurement cycles could be rather cumbersome and slow. But given today's high OPTEMPO environment, the acquisition community has developed solutions to streamline Army procurement and acquisition.

Today's combat environment — with its harsh physical conditions and high OPTEMPO — demands a responsive procurement and supply system to ensure warfighter lethality and survivability. Here, Soldiers from Company A, 3rd Battalion, 141st Infantry Regiment, Texas National Guard, set up a defensive position near Bagram, Afghanistan. (U.S. Army photo by SGT Christopher Kaufmann.)

Our traditional life-cycle acquisition process is a 5- to 7-year process that begins during pre-systems acquisition with the combat developer presenting an Interim Capabilities Document to the Army Requirements Oversight Counsel and Joint Requirements Oversight Counsel for authority to begin developing concepts for a materiel solution to bridge gaps in current and future capabilities. The process is thorough, but slow. It involves multiple levels of decision makers, staffers, technical people, contractors and government personnel within the Army and DOD. They provide data, analysis, technical input, hardware, software, simulation, testing, fielding and sustainment. The process serves a purpose, but in wartime is not responsive enough to meet combatant commander or Soldier requirements.

Operational Needs Statement (ONS)

The process begins when organizations identify new requirements. They then submit an ONS or Urgent Needs Statements (UNS) to the first general officer in their respective chains of command. Each ONS must address an accurate description of the requirement, including — most importantly — the capability gap that needs to be filled. Most units have a tendency to request specific products and name brands. Unfortunately, the *Defense Federal Acquisition Regulation Supplement* (*DFARS*) typically requires government contracts to be available in an equitable manner to all potential vendors. Thankfully, *DFARS* allows contracts that are competitively bid to be awarded as "best value" not "lowest bidder," as was frequently done in the past.

The ONS must include a recommended Basis of Issue Plan for distribution and a sustainment and supportability plan. It must also address all known safety and health hazards. The PM can assist with the technical aspects and independent government cost estimates. Once these documents are compiled, the ONS is forwarded through the chain of command for endorsements of concurrence or nonconcurrence. Most staff offices have tracking systems for each ONS as it is staffed

through various levels of command. *Army Regulation 71-9, Materiel Requirements,* provides regulatory guidance on how the ONS process works. Additionally, recent HQDA G-4 guidance describes the detailed coordination and approval required by HQDA, the materiel developer and the testing community.

The ONS is usually presented to the Joint Acquisition Review Board (JARB). The JARB is generally conducted at the Multi-National Corps/Force-Iraq, Combined Joint Task Force-76 (Afghanistan) and the Coalition Forces Land Component Command (CFLCC) level with certain authority and funding restrictions. The JARB can endorse a requirement and forward the ONS to HQDA or, in some cases, take actions at that level to fulfill a requirement by validating and funding the requirement. The "power-down" concept works great in this situation because it provides the warfighters' equipment faster. The drawback is Army Materiel Command and its major subordinate commands may not be "in the loop" and could lose track of configuration changes.

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Often, not being aware of sustainment responsibilities and associated costs thwarts rapid procurement, illustrating the need for a well-planned ONS from the originator as well as the staff. Staffs at each level of approval must scrutinize every ONS to ensure the gap cannot be bridged without a materiel solution. Staffs and commanders should approve materiel solutions only as a last resort and only after a solid analysis of doctrine, organization, training, leadership, materiel, personnel and facilities (DOTLMPF) has been conducted. Time spent doing this analysis could save the Army millions of dollars. Something as simple as changing TTPs and updating doctrine could actually bridge a gap, thus providing a nonmateriel solution. Units should not adopt the mentality of "just buy it and we'll get the Army to figure out how to sustain it." In fact, 60-80 percent of all life-cycle costs occur after a system is fielded. It is incumbent upon the combat developers and logisticians to ensure that materiel solutions are valid for bridging both technology and capabilities gaps.

If a nonmateriel solution using DOTLMPF cannot be found, the JARB may validate an ONS at the JARB level. Sometimes an ONS may have to be staffed further and validated by HQDA. Intermediate staffing is required at CFLCC and U.S. Central Command prior to being staffed at HQDA G-3. In cases involving Army aviation, the ONS should be forwarded to the Aviation Task Force (AVN TF). The AVN TF would then staff the requirement with the Aviation Center and the combat developer for concurrences/nonconcurrences for materiel solutions.

The user's representative with the loudest voice is the TRADOC Systems Manager (TSM). The TSM typically has two main focus areas — futures and immediate capability gaps. To best support units in the field, TSMs must continuously try to identify immediate capability gaps within the perspective of DOTLMPF. Ultimately, every change to the DOTLMPF must have a requirement behind it and an ONS/UNS is a very good place to start. This process normally can take months for simple needs, and years for more complex needs. The bottom line is the TSM will work all identified gaps and continue to provide warfighters with the best possible capabilities. Fortunately, with HQDA approval, TSM offices, in concert with the PM offices, are taking the initiative to push non-DOTLMPF solutions to fill identified critical needs. There are several major initiatives underway to provide immediate capabilities to the field. There are limitations to these fixes, but the benefits greatly outweigh any shortcomings.

The Advanced Combat Helmet is part of the Rapid Fielding Initiative — a program designed to get Soldiers in the field the best and most up-to-date force protection, mobility and lethality equipment as quickly as possible. (U.S. Army photo.)

To enhance Soldiers' effectiveness in a complex and ever-changing combat environment, the Army is working hard to provide immediate capabilities to the field. Here, Soldiers from Troop E, 2nd Squadron, 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment search for weapons caches near Fallujah, Iraq. (U.S. Army photo by SGT Derek Gaines.)

Once the ONS makes it to the Pentagon G-3, it may be presented to the Counsel of Colonels and the General Officer Review Board for the Army's Requirements and Resources Board. During the validation process, the requirement will go to G-8 Force Development Aviation for sourcing strategy and funding determination with the Army Budget Office. If the ONS is deemed to be a high priority, then funding will be assigned. If funding is limited, then quantities might be adjusted to support limited fielding, which might include deployed units only. For example, in aviation units, this may become a Threshold Mission Essential Package. In some cases where funding is extremely limited, some equipment may be designated as Stay-Behind Equipment.

In cases where the requirement is validated and funded, the G-3 Future Warfighting Capabilities Division will initiate a materiel release by issuing a Directed Requirement Memorandum, which requires a:

- Safety and health hazard assessment.
- Airworthiness statement, if applicable.
- Explosive ordnance disposal statement.
- Insensitive munitions certificate.
- Acceptance statement signed by the gaining command's general officer (or civilian equivalent).

The procurement process — once validated and funded — will depend on the type of equipment to be purchased. In the case of COTS equipment, the product is generally considered readily available unless large requests generate lead times. Non-Developmental Items require longer procurement timelines to accommodate developmental and operational testing. Some cases may require further testing, even after an Urgent Materiel Release (UMR). COTS procurements, although quick, may present second- and third-order consequences that, if not properly planned for, may cause sustainability and stockage problems as mentioned earlier. Approved UMRs require materiel release coordinators to enter items into the Materiel Release Tracking System. The PMs will work through their Life Cycle Management Commands to enter the UMR into the Standard Study Number-Line Item Number Automated Management and Integrating System. Other procurement systems include the Rapid Equipping Force, in which teams are deployed forward and have the ability to make fast procurements happen through nontraditional, streamlined acquisition processes.

These new procurement instruments are getting much-needed equipment and supplies into warfighters' hands quicker and with fewer logistics setbacks than ever before. Using this method, we can mitigate issues associated with rapid procurements, including technical manuals, provisioning for spare parts, special tools, calibration, repair contracts, configuration management, unit accountability and disposal costs. New equipment delivered faster will challenge logisticians at all levels. As we rapidly decrease the traditional logistics tail and footprint, acquisition professionals will continue to overcome sustainment challenges through innovation, procurement process changes and manufacturing solutions.

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